



# Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail



A progress report on the status of the Trail

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## On the Path

**O**n behalf of the National Park Service, welcome to the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail (OVNHT). This 330-mile route commemorates a heroic event of the American Revolutionary War—the 1780 campaign by citizen militia which resulted in Patriot victory at the Battle of Kings Mountain. Years later, President Thomas Jefferson called that battle the “turn of the tide” in America’s fight for independence.

In 1980, the United States Congress created the Trail a national historic trail, the first such designation in the eastern US. Since that time, a variety of organizations have been working to promote and to develop the Trail as a resource for the communities through which it passes. They want to remind all Americans of the sacrifices and valor that citizens of this rising nation exhibited two centuries ago.

Communities throughout four states are participating in partnerships with the National Park Service to help make the Trail a reality in their regions. This progress report shares the success stories of many partners and, we hope, encourages others to become involved in this collective effort. We invite other partners and other communities to join us in helping make the OVNHT a reality for all our communities and for all Americans.

As the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Campaign to Kings Mountain approaches in 2005, we anticipate even greater participation and interest in the OVNHT. If you or your organization have ideas about how you can participate, please contact us. We look forward to seeing all of you on the Overmountain Victory NH Trail.


- Paul Carson, Superintendent

## Rock Solid History

*Museum of NC Minerals is home to first OVNHT exhibit*



First OVNHT exhibit, at Museum of NC Minerals, near Spruce Pine

“**O**nce upon a time . . .” begins many a simple story. But our story—the Story of the Overmountain Men of 1780—continues its grand telling with the installation and dedication of the first professionally designed exhibit. 

On October 29, hundreds of Parkway visitors, local citizens, park volunteers, elected officials and NPS staff gathered at Gillespie Gap on the Blue Ridge Parkway at the Museum of North Carolina Minerals. They came to dedicate both a new, extensive mineral exhibit and the new interpretive exhibit about the Overmountain

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## Town of Elkin Is Helping Build the Trail

*Community receives 2003 NPS Certificate of Achievement*

**E**ach year the National Park Service  recognizes a person or organization whose efforts on behalf of the OVNHT have contributed the most to promoting and to furthering the mission of the Trail. In 2003, several individuals and organizations were nominated; all deservedly so. The Trail has many active partners working in all regions. This year, the Town of Elkin received the NPS Service Award for its enthusiastic efforts to embrace its heritage as a muster ground for the Surry County militia and to help promote its position as one of three trail heads of the OVNHT.



Accepting the 2003 NPS award from OVNHT Superintendent Paul Carson on behalf of the Town of Elkin are (l to r) R.G. Absher, president of Wilkes-Surry Chapter, OVTA, Teresa Howell, Manager of Elkin's Main Street Program, and Mayor Tom Gwyn.

In 2002, NPS certified a mile-long segment of municipally-owned trail

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## An Educational Revolution

*Trail partners create a new, curricula-based education program about Overmountain Men*

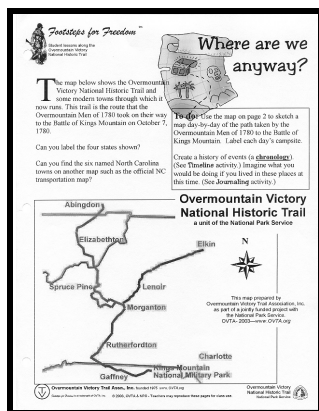
A new generation is learning about the Patriot heroes in the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution.



Undertaking a special project funded by the NPS's Challenge Cost Share Program, the Overmountain Victory Trail Association, Inc. (OVTA) has partnered with Kings Mountain District Schools (KMDS) to develop a curricula-based education program. The National Park Service and OVTA will distribute these materials and the entire education program free of charge to teachers who want to use them.

The OVTA/KMDS project had to create engaging materials and activities that would help the students learn about the Overmountain Men of 1780 while helping the teachers meet specific, required curricula goals in areas such as social studies, mathematics, language arts, computer literacy, health and physical education.

During a three-day workshop in June and throughout the



Example page of materials created for teachers to use with students.

summer, teachers and the project consultant working for OVTA shared ideas and created materials. The teachers decided to piggy-back on OVTA's 12-episode serial, *Footsteps for Freedom*. (See [www.ovta.org](http://www.ovta.org)). The resulting educational program was tested in September and October with the participation of fourth graders at two elementary schools in Kings Mountain, NC.

The National Park Service is making printed copies of these materials available to teachers. These materials will also be available for downloading free-of-charge through the websites for OVTA ([www.ovta.org](http://www.ovta.org)) and OVNHT ([www.nps.gov/ovni](http://www.nps.gov/ovni)).

As more teachers use the materials, they are invited to share with NPS new ideas and their experiences to help continually improve this educational program. ●



(top to bottom) Students wrote daily about the Overmountain Men in their journals; students made cornhusk dolls, a child's toy of the time; a costumed storyteller gave oath of allegiance to "militia recruits."



## Trail Partners Adding New Trail in Tennessee

*Hampton Creek Cove is site of collaborative effort*

A new trail is rising in the Tennessee hills.

Through the cooperative efforts of public and private interests, a new section of the OVNHT is being created on public lands. It will enable hikers to experience the "Crossing of the Roan" as did the Overmountain Men of 1780 riding along the Yellow Mountain Gap Road. The Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy,



Views along Hampton Creek Cove are timeless.

creation of a trail segment to connect with the current OVNHT route at Yellow Mountain Gap. That is where

the Cherokee National Forest, the National Park Service, Roan Mountain State Park, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and, OVTA are exploring the



Historic Shelving Rock at Roan Mountain State Park, TN

Rock, the militia's Sept 26 campsite.

The views looking west from Yellow Mountain Gap are spectacular. In addition, a trail through Hampton Creek Cove will enable hikers and history buffs to relive one of the exciting moments in the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780. ●

Forest Service land. Plans could include linking the trail with Shelving



# A Sign of the Times

*New trail signage in South Carolina guides visitors along the OVNHT*

**M**aking a spectacle of oneself may be unwise, but getting a driver's attention is the whole purpose of highway signage.

New road signs for the OVNHT Commemorative Motor Route have been installed in Cherokee and Spartanburg counties, South Carolina. The new signs, provided by the National Park Service, help direct and reassure the driving public as visitors follow the Commemorative Motor Route.



**New signs in and around Gaffney direct visitors along the Commemorative Motor Route.**

The signs were erected just in time for the 2003 annual reenactment when many people were visiting historic sites along the trail.

Two kinds of signs direct visitors. Brown signs with white lettering and the OVNHT logo are prominent at intersections to indicate the turns and directions drivers should follow. Along the route, smaller white signs with brown logos reassure drivers that they are on the correct route. "The distinctive trail logo is easy to see," says Paul Carson, OVNHT Superintendent. "We think the signs will help increase the public's



interest in the trail and make it easier for them to follow the official route across some 330 miles."

NPS is working with the departments of transportation in Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and South Carolina to establish and update cooperative agreements for installing and maintaining OVNHT signage for the entire Commemorative Motor Route. ●



**Drivers following the OVNHT Commemorative Motor Route are reassured by new distinctive route markers.**

*(Continued from page 1)*



**Tranquil scene along Big Elkin Creek**

along Big Elkin Creek from Elkin Municipal Park leading toward the Yadkin River. The Park sits on the site believed to be the muster ground for the militia gathered under Major Joseph Winston.

In 2003, the Town of Elkin worked with the several local citizens who owned the land along the north side of the Yadkin River from Big Elkin Creek to the Wilkes County line. The landowners consented to the necessary agreements; and the additional Trail segments along Big Elkin Creek and the Yadkin River were certified at a ceremony on September 27, the 223<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the militia muster. In addition, Elkin applied for and received a state



**(top) Militia "recruits" practice marching; (left) new trail segment follows along Yadkin River; (below) procession marches to dedication site of new marker.**

Elkin and Wilkes County also formed a new chapter of OVTA and were received into membership in August.



**New State Historic Marker in Elkin**

At the annual ceremony at Kings Mountain National Military Park on October 7, OVNHT Superintendent Paul Carson presented the Service Award to the Town of Elkin. To celebrate the award, Mayor Tom Gwyn brought a rock from Big Elkin Creek to toss, as tradition dictates, onto the cairn of stones that marks the grave of British Major Patrick Ferguson.

Congratulations to the citizens of Elkin for their commitment to the OVNHT and to telling The Story of the Overmountain Men of 1780. ●

highway historic marker for the Surry Muster Field and hosted a day-long celebration complete with living history encampment. Citizens of



## Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail

This is the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780 and how they helped win America's independence.

### Late September 1780

September 12, Burke County (NC) militiamen under the command of Charles McDowell skirmished with a part of Ferguson's Loyalist army at Cane Creek, then retreat over the Appalachian Mountains to Sycamore Shoals.

As a prisoner of war released by British Major Patrick Ferguson, Patriot militiaman Samuel Phillips delivers Ferguson's threatening message to Isaac Shelby in the overmountain regions of NC. Isaac Shelby rides 40 miles to the home of John Sevier to talk about the threat. The men agree to send messengers to call for a muster of militia at Sycamore Shoals (today's Elizabethton, TN).

**September 24** – Colonel William Campbell leaves Craig's Meadow (today's Abingdon, VA) with 200 Virginia militiamen. Colonel Arthur Campbell leads another group of 200. They ride along the Watauga Road.

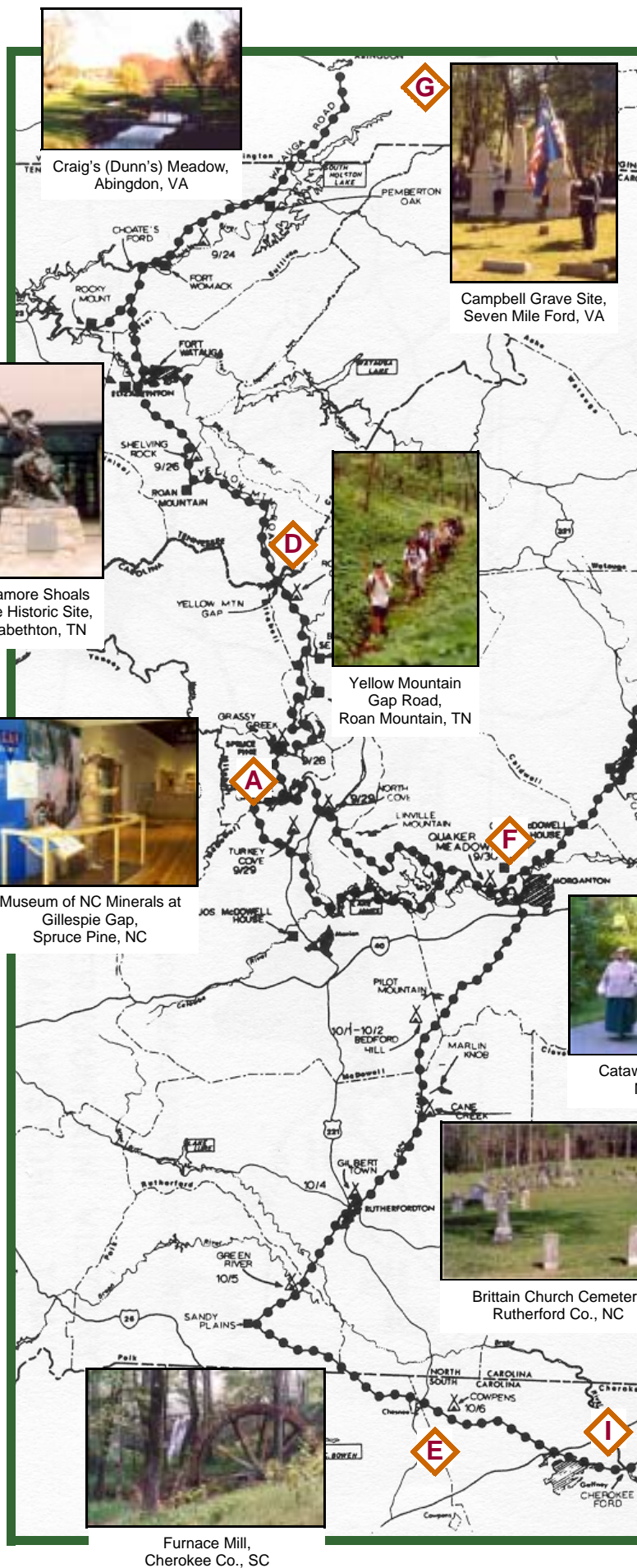
**September 25** – Four-hundred eighty militiamen from the Overmountain regions of North Carolina (today's Tennessee) muster at Sycamore Shoals with the militiamen from Virginia and 160 militiamen from Burke Co.

**September 26** – The Overmountain Men ride toward the mountains driving a herd of cattle to feed their army; they camp at Shelving Rock, storing their powder beneath the rock ledge to keep it dry.

**September 27** – Overmountain Men "Cross the Roan" through the Yellow Mountain Gap after slaughtering beeves and preparing the meat. At the top of the mountain saddle, they parade in "snow shoe-mouth deep" and take roll. Two men with Tory leanings are discovered missing. The Overmountain Men camp along Roaring River. Meanwhile, in the northern piedmont of North Carolina, 350 Wilkes-Surry Patriot militia under the command of Major Joseph Winston and Colonel Benjamin Cleveland ride upstream along the Yadkin River toward Quaker Meadows.

**September 28** – Overmountain Men move south along the North Toe River and camp where it joins Grassy Creek (near today's Spruce Pine).

**September 29** – Patriots divide into two groups near Gillespie Gap and descend the Blue Ridge Mountains following separate routes; they camp at Turkey Cove and North Cove.







**September 30** – The two groups of Overmountain Men ride along separate routes near the Catawba River and reunite along the way. They camp at Quaker Meadows where they are joined by the Wilkes-Surry militia and others. The spirit of the men is lifted as the band of Patriots grows in number.

**October 1** – The combined army of over 1400 militiamen head south toward Gilbert Town (near today's Rutherfordton) where they expect to find Ferguson's army. Because of heavy rain, the Patriots stop in the late afternoon at Bedford Hill in South Mountain Gap.

**October 2** – Continuing rain keeps the men in camp this day. The Patriot leaders meet and elect William Campbell as their commander.

**October 3** – The Patriot militiamen prepare for battle and move toward Gilbert Town along Cane Creek. They do not pitch camp; the men sleep on their arms.

**October 4** – The Patriots arrive in Gilbert Town to find that Ferguson is already gone. The militia leaders send out scouts and continue south to learn if Ferguson is heading for the fort at Ninety-Six (SC) or for Charlotte (NC).

**October 5** – The Patriots head southwest and camp at Alexander's Ford on the Green River. They learn from scouts that Ferguson is marching toward Charlotte and the protection of Cornwallis's army.

**October 6** – The Patriots ride southeast toward Cowpens where they are joined by militiamen from South Carolina, Georgia and Lincoln Co., NC. They learn that Ferguson is only 35 miles away, camped at Kings Mountain. The leaders pick the 900 best marksmen and the 900 fastest horses. At 9:00 P.M. these Patriot militiamen ride into the night as a cold rain continues to fall.

**October 7** – Having ridden all night and forded the rain-swollen Broad River, the Patriot army encircles Kings Mountain at 3:00 pm and in "one heroic hour" captures or kills—including the despised Patrick Ferguson—the entire Loyalist Army. The Patriot losses are small: 28 killed and 65 wounded. The Loyalists suffer more: 150 killed, 150 wounded, some 800 captured. Cornwallis's left flank is destroyed.

**Epilogue** – With this Patriot victory at Kings Mountain, the British found it harder to muster Loyalists. After subsequent battles at Cowpens and Guilford Courthouse, Cornwallis decided he could not subdue North Carolina. He moved into Virginia; just 12 months and 12 days after the Battle of Kings Mountain, Cornwallis surrendered the British forces to the Continental Army under General George Washington, on Oct. 19, 1781 at Yorktown, VA. ●

## Quaker Meadows – Then and Now

*Morganton celebrates its Patriot heroes in several ways*

**T**he early morning was still gray when the peaceful quiet at the

edge of a residential neighborhood was pierced by gunshots. Seven men clad in 18<sup>th</sup> century dress, all members of OVTA, fired a rifle volley and performed a Mourning of Arms to honor the Patriots of the Revolutionary War who are buried at Quaker Meadows Cemetery. The cemetery sits on a quiet hilltop just south of the historic Charles McDowell house in Morganton. These OVTA marchers had gathered during their annual reenactment with members of Historic Burke Foundation, Inc. and the National Park Service to certify this cemetery as an official part of the OVNHT.

Historic Burke Foundation, Inc. owns and operates the Charles McDowell House

(upper left) Lee Anderson, Director of Development and Design, City of Morganton (l) and Mayor Mel Cohen hold NPS certificate recognizing new segment of OVNHT in Morganton. OVNHT Superintendent Paul Carson, Morganton Councilman Larry Whisnant and OVTA reenactors join in the ceremony. (upper right) Citizens enjoy walking along the OVNHT in Morganton. (lower right) The new all-weather pedestrian trail includes beautiful bridges. (lower left) The Catawba River invites walking and fishing along the Trail.



where archeological investigations are underway regarding a later period of activity on the plantation. Wake



**OVTA reenactors fire a commemorative volley at Quaker Meadows Cemetery.**



**(top) Charles McDowell House (built 1812) sits near the site of the 1780 house; (right) archeologist Ken Robinson points to an interesting roadbed found on the plantation.**



Forest University archeologist, Ken Robinson, has found several old roadbeds on the property and believes that one adjacent to the 1812 house may be the major route followed by travelers approaching the ford across the Catawba River at Quaker Meadows during the time of the American Revolution.

Along the east bank of the Catawba River, the city of Morganton has built the Catawba River Greenway as a recreational resource for the community. Because it closely follows the historic route of the Overmountain Men of 1780, sections of it have been certified by NPS as official parts of the OVNHT. ●



## A Grave Event

*William Campbell Gravesite is certified as OVNHT site*

**O**n September 24, 2003, a hero of the Battle of Kings Mountain was remembered and honored by his descendants and by those who now live in the vicinity of his home site



**Reenactors fire volley to honor Campbell**

and gravesite. Members of the community of Seven Mile Ford, Virginia gathered at the Aspsenvale Cemetery to dedicate the gravesite of Brigadier General William Campbell (1745-1781). As a Colonel of the Virginia militia in 1780, Campbell was the commander of all the Patriot militiamen at the Battle of Kings Mountain.

Although the gravesite is approximately 20 miles from the trailhead of the OVNHT in Abingdon, the National Park

Service eagerly welcomed the interest of the community to recognize this hero and his gravesite. The walled cemetery, overlooking the Holston Valley, is owned by Gary and Linda Sutherland. During the ceremony, the Sutherlands received an official certificate from the National Park Service recognizing the gravesite as a Certified Site of the OVNHT. They are now one of many partners who are collaborating with the NPS to make the OVNHT a successful trail



**Historic marker for Aspsenvale, 1780 home to William Campbell**

*(Continued on page 7)*



## Great Scott, a Trail!

*Scouts help build trail around Army Corps reservoir in NC*

A group of Boy Scouts and adult leaders gathered at W. Kerr Scott Dam & Reservoir on National Public Lands Day, September 20, to continue building a new segment of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. The route for the new trail follows the layout created by the Brushy Mountain Cyclists Club and uses the



**Scouts at work**

contours of the surrounding terrain to create an interesting trek. The historic route followed in 1780 along the Yadkin River has been covered by water since the dam was constructed in 1963.

"It is so exciting to have all these people involved in creating this new trail," said R.G. Absher, Assistant Operations Manager, W. Kerr Scott Reservoir, who is also a past president of OVTA and a long time promoter of the OVNHT. The recreational trail along the shoreline will connect with the Yadkin River



**New trail at Kerr Scott Reservoir**

Greenway downstream and become part of the several miles of OVNHT's eastern leg that hikers can enjoy. ●

*(Continued from page 6)*

and an educational resource for the region.

"We are delighted to see the community so interested in this site," said the Sutherlands. "We have wanted to help preserve the history here for others to enjoy. We are delighted to be working with the

## Colonel James Williams Remembered

*Tomb is certified as OVNHT site in South Carolina*

On October 7, the tomb of Colonel James Williams was designated a Certified Site along the OVNHT. It sits today on the lawn of the Cherokee County Administration Building which was built around 1914 as the Carnegie Library in Gaffney, SC. The tomb and building lie along the Commemorative Motor Route of the OVNHT.

**Members of OVTA fired two volleys to honor Col. Williams and performed a Mourning of Arms.**



Members of the Daughters of the American Revolution



**Dr. Bobby Moss addressed the large crowd which gathered for the ceremony.**



**Members of the Cherokee County Council, Bailey Humphries (l) and Barry Medley (r), received the certification plaque from Paul Carson, OVNHT Superintendent.**

The Overmountain Victory Trail Committee, established by Cherokee County government and a longtime Trail partner, organized the certification ceremony. The keynote speaker for the event was Dr. Bobby G. Moss, Sr., author of over 40 books

(DAR) and the Colonel James Williams Chapter, South Carolina Society Children of the American Revolution also participated in the ceremony. ●

National Park Service to help tell this part of the story of the Overmountain Men. We welcome any visitors to the cemetery who want to learn more about these Revolutionary War heroes."

Members of the Royal Oak Chapter, DAR and the Francis Marion VFW Post # 4667 participated in the ceremony.



**Linda & Gary Sutherland at the Campbell grave**

Members of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association fired ceremonial volleys and performed a Mourning of Arms to honor General William Campbell.

"The inclusion of this site as part of the OVNHT, not only helps us better tell the story of the Overmountain Men," said Paul Carson, OVNHT Superintendent, "it enables this community to be an active part of telling that story. This was a citizen army. This is a citizen trail. The people of the communities along that trail will help keep the story alive." ●

## Patriots for Partners

*Trail partners are taking big steps together*

**B**usiness consultants tell us that an organization is formed when a task is more than one person can do alone. That is certainly true when it comes to building the OVNHT.

Today, dozens of organizations are working together across four states to build the commemorative Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail (OVNHT). In fact, today the Trail has over 80 partners and more are joining every month! Here are some of the trail's partners:

### Virginia

Two Private Landowners  
Virginia DOT  
Virginia Department of Tourism  
Virginia Department of Historical Resources  
Town of Abingdon  
Washington County Historical Society  
Washington County



### Tennessee

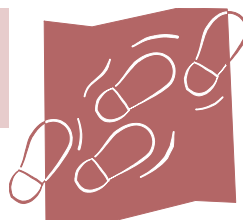
One Private Landowner  
Tennessee DOT  
Tennessee Department of Tourism  
Roan Mountain State Park  
Sycamore Shoals State Historic Area  
Rocky Mount State Historic Site  
Hampton Creek Cove State Natural Area  
Cherokee National Forest – U.S.F.S.



Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy  
Appalachian National Scenic Trail  
Appalachian Trail Club

### North Carolina

Numerous Private Landowners  
NCDOT  
NC Dept. of Cultural Resources  
NC Dept. of Tourism  
Pisgah National Forest – U.S. Forest Service  
Blue Ridge Parkway – NPS  
The Altapass Foundation  
Brittain Church  
McDowell County Historical Society  
Historic Burke Foundation, Inc.  
Wilkes County Historical Society  
Surry County Historical Society  
Rutherford County Historical Society  
Lake James State Park  
Fort Defiance Historic Site  
Yadkin River Greenway  
Catawba River Greenway  
Duke Power Company  
Crescent Land Corp.  
Unimin Corporation  
Catawba-Wataree Relicensing Coalition  
City of Morganton  
City of Kings Mountain  
Town of Elkin  
Town of Rutherfordton  
Town of Ruth  
County of Burke  
Old Wilkes  
Piedmont Land Conservancy  
Foothills Land Conservancy  
Mountain to the Sea Trail  
Kings Mountain Gateway Committee



Betchler Development Corporation  
Daughters of the American Revolution (various chapters)  
Sons of the American Revolution (various chapters)  
W. Kerr Scott Reservoir – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Foothills Nature Science Society

### South Carolina

One Private Landowner  
SCDOT  
SC Department of Tourism  
Cowpens National Battlefield – NPS  
Kings Mountain NMP – NPS  
Kings Mountain State Park  
SC Department of Parks (statewide)  
Overmountain Victory Trail Committee  
Cherokee County Council  
Town of Gaffney  
Carolina Backcountry Alliance  
The Palmetto Conservation Foundation  
Colonial Pipeline Company  
Cherokee County Historical Society



### All States

Overmountain Victory Trail Association, Inc.  
Federal Highway Administration  
American Hiking Society  
HistoryAmerica Tours  
American Battlefield Protection Program  
Eastern National Monument Association

With so many interested parties working together on the OVNHT, we should not be surprised to see major elements of the Trail becoming a reality every year. It is indeed an exciting time to be involved with building the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. ●



**For more information about being a Trail Partner, contact:**

Paul Carson, Superintendent  
Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail  
2635 Park Road  
Blacksburg, SC 29702

(864) 936-3477  
[www.nps.gov/ovvi](http://www.nps.gov/ovvi)



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Victory National Historic Trail a unit of the NPS.

In space provided by the Blue Ridge Parkway, the OVNHT display tells the story of the campaign of 1780, which led to a Patriot victory at Kings Mountain. Highlighted by a life-sized figure of an "Overmountain Man" the exhibit traces the historic route from southwest Virginia, to Sycamore Shoals, through Gillespie Gap, to Quaker Meadows and beyond.

This exhibit will inform many of the 100,000 annual visitors to Gillespie Gap about the Story of the Overmountain Men of 1780 and the Trail those visitors can follow today into other communities along the way. ●

**Picture credits:** All photography by Randell Jones except "Scouts at Work" by R.G. Absher, Hampton Creek Cove by Bob Hardin, Mineral Museum by NPS, and Aspenvale marker by NPS.